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Provisional summary record of the 34th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 16 July 2013, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Khan (Vice-President) ..... (Pakistan)

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In the absence of Mr. Osorio (Colombia), Mr. Khan (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

Panel discussion: Reducing vulnerability, improving capacities and managing risks: an approach for humanitarian and development actors to work together

The President invited the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to act as moderator.

Ms. Amos (Moderator) said that 2012 had been the third consecutive year in which natural disasters had caused upwards of US$ 100 billion in damage. The figures were expected to continue to rise because of the impact of climate change, environmental degradation, rising poverty, food insecurity, water scarcity, unplanned urbanization and population growth in disaster-prone areas. There was a need to reorient the system so that humanitarian and development actors and Governments worked together to reduce and manage risks rather than simply responding to crises once they had hit. To manage risks a systematic approach must be taken to dealing with uncertainty and minimizing harm and losses. The first step was to identify risk factors. Then develop strategies to address them through mechanisms such as early warning measures, livelihood support programmes and insurance schemes.

Governments shouldered most of the responsibility for tackling risk and for building resilience over the long term, but humanitarian organizations could make a crucial contribution to risk analyses, disaster preparedness, the development of early warning systems and early recovery processes. The resilience approach currently being taken in the Sahel was an example of how plans to promote sustainable development could be aligned and the cycle of crisis and recovery broken. However, risk management was chronically underfunded. Between 2005 and 2011, a mere 3 per cent of the US$ 78 billion spent on humanitarian assistance had gone to disaster prevention and preparedness. More needed to be done in that area.

Explaining that the panel discussion was intended to be interactive, she invited attendees to take part in a poll, via text message, on what they considered to represent the greatest benefit of a risk-management and vulnerability-reduction approach. The results would be made available by the end of the meeting.

Mr. Idrees (Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, Pakistan National Disaster Management Authority), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that Pakistan was prone to devastating natural disasters. For example, monsoon rains had become increasingly erratic and intense and were affecting new parts of the country. In the wake of the 2005 earthquake, the State had established a more proactive disaster management system to tackle the lack of risk assessment in planning and the problems of poorly constructed infrastructure, inadequate search and rescue capacity and limited community awareness. Through the system, which involved an array of institutions operating at the federal and provincial levels, pre- and post-disaster management activities were undertaken.

Efforts to establish a proactive system had been hindered by limited resources and a succession of disasters of unprecedented magnitude, notably flash floods in what were normally arid regions. In addition, gaps had been identified in capacity-building, local management of relief assistance, multi-hazard assessments, the alignment of land registries, land-use planning, building codes, long-term weather forecasting and capacity to establish a disaster response force. Pakistan had nonetheless made considerable progress in areas such

as institutional strengthening, training and preparedness, contingency planning, community-based disaster management and the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in development policies. In February 2013, a national disaster management plan had been adopted and work had begun to devise community-based disaster relief management guidelines.

Mr. Pratomo (Founder of Jalin Merapi Community Radio, Indonesia), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that he wished to describe the situation of the communities living close to the volcano on Mount Merapi on the island of Java. The volcano was on a four-year cycle and eruptions, though rare, were devastating because of the volcano's proximity to areas of human habitation. The Jalin Merapi network had been founded in 2006 to raise awareness of imminent risks and ensure better communication during crises. The network consisted of eight community radio stations and thousands of volunteers who monitored the activity of the volcano in tandem with the authorities and NGOs. The volunteers communicated with one another by two-way radio and through social networks. All the information that they provided, such as maps of evacuation camps, were uploaded onto a single website. Thanks to its ability to gain access to timely and reliable information, Jalin Merapi served as an intermediary between donors and aid agencies and recipients. It had also forged ties with communities around other active Indonesian volcanoes. Network members had learned about the importance of involving all stakeholders, of using technology and the media and of enlisting the population to provide accurate information.

Mr. Sørensen (Director-General of the European Community Humanitarian Office) said that the example of Jalin Merapi was very interesting and that the European Commission had only recently begun to use crowdsourcing to gather information on developing crises.

Recounting a recent visit to the Sahel region, he said that nutrition centres were receiving growing numbers of severely malnourished children. The reason was that many farmers had had to sell their land and grain stocks to survive earlier droughts and had thus lost their livelihoods. The problem was a structural one, a question of maladapted agricultural policy and inadequate social safety nets. A humanitarian response to such crises was insufficient: it was crucial to tackle the root causes.

Eighty per cent of humanitarian aid provided by the European Union was used to tackle protracted humanitarian crises. Unless the root causes of those crises were addressed, emergency response and relief operations would be underfunded in the long term. National development plans should be signed locally, supported by regional organizations and include actions to build resilience. Priorities should include the development of sustainable agriculture and water, health and social safety networks to help vulnerable populations to live through the lean season without having to sell off the very thing that was the basis of their livelihoods.

Complementarity was crucial to increasing the effectiveness and the geographical coverage of humanitarian activities. Humanitarian agencies should consider extending their post-emergency presence in order to support development partners as they made the transition from relief to development. Dialogue and cooperation between humanitarian agencies and development partners was sometimes hampered by the multiplicity of actors, but had improved and must be made a priority.

Mr. Bostrom (Director of the Future of Humanity Institute and the Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology, University of Oxford) said that, when seen in a wider context, the number of disaster-related deaths in any given year was low compared with the overall annual number of deaths worldwide. The best approach was to do as much as possible in the situation, and to identify the most cost-effective life-saving measures. The distribution of mosquito nets to combat malaria, for example, was inexpensive and effective

compared with other, more elaborate initiatives. He proposed that an evaluation should be made of how many lives were saved per dollar spent on a given programme and priorities set accordingly. Instead of designing new, innovative measures, it might be preferable for stakeholders to use direct cash transfers so that affected populations could invest in what they deemed the most pressing need and cut out intermediaries.

While preventing problems was certainly preferable to remedying them, the benefits of resilience-building were difficult to quantify. That said, stockpiling food to help a community to get through the lean season might have a more measurable impact than institution-building, for example. Coordination was also crucial and the United Nations and other international organizations played an important coordinating role when it came to dealing with global emergencies such as pandemics.

Two constituencies which were mostly ignored when humanitarian action was discussed were animals and future generations. The suffering endured by animals in mass production, for example, could be relieved if simple, cost effective measures such as rules on minimum cage space were to be introduced. Future generations were facing a risk that threatened the very existence of humanity. Some experts suggested that there was a 19 per cent chance of human extinction by the end of the century, which was a pressing argument for action. Considering the number of lives on the line, any measures that could be taken to reduce that risk would be far more effective in terms of lives saved than even the most effective work of a humanitarian charity.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom) said that a 20-year study conducted in Kenya had shown that for each dollar spent on resilience 2.9 dollars had been saved on humanitarian expenditure. The United Kingdom Department for International Development was committed to incorporating disaster-resilience measures into all country programmes by 2015. The essential elements of effective disaster risk management were shared multi-hazard risk assessments, joint planning, multi-year humanitarian spending plans, flexible programming and cooperation between humanitarian and development actors. She wished to hear the panellists' views on practical ways to bridge the gap between relief and development. She wondered whether the current aid architecture was suited to bringing humanitarian and development actors together.

With regard to the difficulties described by the Director of the National Disaster Management Authority of Pakistan, she suggested that the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) might be able to assist with more accurate long-term weather forecasting. She also enquired how the lessons learned in different countries could be collated and made available to others. Could cash transfers be used to speed up the delivery of humanitarian responses to disasters?

Ms. Goldberg (Canada) said that her Government supported the focus on resilience. She asked whether an extended post-emergency presence of humanitarian agencies might not overstretch the humanitarian system, and what criteria would be used to decide whether relief agencies should stay or leave. Commending Pakistan on its response to the 2005 earthquake, she asked whether the 2013 national disaster management plan provided for the involvement of women and vulnerable groups in disaster risk management at the provincial and district levels. She also highlighted the role of risk insurance in the management of recurrent disasters.

Mr. Okada (Japan) said that disaster preparedness and mitigation were linked to the building of a disaster-resilient society. The incorporation of a risk-reduction perspective in development and disaster recovery, with the involvement of a wide range of local, national and international stakeholders, was also crucial. He welcomed efforts to enhance cooperation between humanitarian and development agencies, including the development of the draft Common Framework for National Capacity Development for Emergency

Preparedness and the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience.

Mr. Hilmersson (Sweden) said that while humanitarian agencies played an important role in cooperative efforts to build resilience, government leadership was crucial to creating the conditions for resilience. Joint risk and vulnerability analysis and better data collection and sharing were also critical. The Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative and the multi-year Common Assessment Framework were commendable achievements, and he asked panellists if they could give further examples of cooperation between humanitarian and development agencies. He would be particularly interested to learn of the experience of Pakistan in cooperating with the United Nations system in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake. More flexible and predictable funding would certainly enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian operations, and he asked for panellists' views on more suitable funding architectures. The difficulty in quantifying the benefits of prevention should not be viewed as an obstacle to resilience-building efforts.

Mr. Eriza (Indonesia) said that in 2009 Indonesia had launched a programme to build disaster-resilient villages that involved a series of capacity-building activities in pilot villages that were prone to different types of disasters. The goal was to help local governments and communities to build resilience in order to deal with the specific disasters that they faced. By the end of 2012, some 1,023 villages had achieved some degree of resilience, through the design of hazard maps, designation of evacuation routes and construction of shelters. The programme had been recognized as a best practice model at the Fifth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2012.

Mr. Sørensen (Director-General, European Community Humanitarian Office) said that a new aid architecture should be designed to include cooperation among all donors, including the international financial institutions. National development plans and humanitarian strategic plans must be evaluated on the basis of their impact at the village level. An extended presence of humanitarian actors in disaster-stricken countries would certainly stretch the humanitarian system to its limits, but facilitate useful cooperation between humanitarian and development actors.

With regard to the difficulty of measuring the benefits of resilience, he said that in Northern Kenya malnutrition rates in local communities that had been trained in drought management, fishing and horticulture, among others, were 25 per cent lower than in neighbouring communities. European Union-led resilience-building efforts had helped to improve dialogue between development and humanitarian actors and geographical coverage and complementarity of humanitarian operations. Most Sahel countries that benefited from the European Development Fund had made food security and agriculture a development priority.

Mr. Idrees (Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, Pakistan National Disaster Management Authority) said that Pakistan already cooperated extensively with WMO, but long-term weather forecasting capabilities were limited everywhere. The possibility of extreme weather events could not be ruled out, and hazards such as flash floods were not always predictable. Pakistan had developed a flash-flood early-warning system and its national disaster management plan had been formulated in close cooperation with Japanese experts.

Pakistan highly recommended the idea of extending the presence of humanitarian actors to ensure sustainability of relief. In its view, early recovery support initiatives should be linked to long-term reconstruction and development measures, including resilience-building. Following the 2005 earthquake, His Government had included earthquake resilience conditions in the criteria for providing compensation for damage to housing.

The Authority had established cells dealing specifically with women and children. In all disaster response situations, humanitarian relief partners were provided with instructions on the specific aid needs of women and children. The Authority was looking at how to improve public-sector risk financing and was working with the World Bank on mechanisms such as catastrophe-drawdown options. It was also close to finalizing work on insurance safety nets for areas that were especially prone to natural disaster.

The Authority worked closely with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on contingency plans to deal with the monsoon season, for example. Officials were being trained in such areas as aid distribution, camp management and the special needs of vulnerable groups. The National Disaster Management Commission had decided to allocate 2 per cent of federal budget development spending to disaster risk reduction. The introduction of a dedicated budget line for disaster risk prevention and management was being considered.

Mr. Pratomo (Founder of Jalin Merapi Community Radio, Indonesia) said that donors should take stock of the capacities and not only the vulnerabilities of communities hit by disasters. Local communities were capable of assessing needs and reacting to emergency situations. Raising disaster awareness in communities was fundamental, as were good lines of communication between them and Governments and NGOs.

Mr. Bostrom (Director of the Future of Humanity Institute and the Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology, University of Oxford) said that it was not difficult to measure improvements in resilience in communities when resilience-building efforts were synonymous with improvements in communities' overall standard of living. What was more difficult to gauge was the long-term benefits of providing one-off windfalls to communities. The importance of measuring the effectiveness of any relief and development activities should not be underestimated, as it was only through analysis that the appropriateness of a given approach could be gauged. Governments and relief agencies should learn from the experience of the reinsurance industry with regard to disaster and risk finance and perhaps emulate its modelling techniques or consider the possibility of purchasing catastrophe bonds.

Mr. Pérez (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union was firmly in favour of building the resilience of States to deal with natural disasters. He would like to know how the work of the various agencies engaged in disaster relief could be better coordinated, how donors could be persuaded of the need to boost funding for disaster prevention mechanisms, and how all stakeholders could be encouraged to build such mechanisms into their development planning.

Mr. Jonas (Benin) said that the poorest and most vulnerable countries generally did not have the means to carry out disaster risk prevention activities. In Benin and neighbouring countries, farmers failed to provide sufficient produce to meet local needs, often because they grew cash crops and produce for export. He would like to know how Pakistan coordinated the delivery of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations with bilateral aid arrangements. He would also like to know to what extent the Jalin Merapi Community Radio station was directly involved in humanitarian aid distribution in times of disaster. Turning to the matter of measuring the effectiveness of disaster risk prevention plans, he asked what the price of a human life was.

Mr. Jay (Observer for Switzerland) asked how improved disaster response requirements could be woven into the post-2015 development agenda and to what areas donors should allocate disaster relief funds.

Mr. Lyngroth (Observer for Norway) said that the humanitarian response to disasters could only be improved through closer coordination with development agencies and a more proactive approach by national Governments. A broader donor base and more

effective funding mechanisms were needed. He would like to know how preparations for the post-Hyogo process, the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals could be used to foster a more comprehensive approach to risk, vulnerability and preparedness. He asked what challenges must be overcome in order to set up comprehensive frameworks.

Ms. Bibalou (Gabon) said that the preservation of forests and anti-desertification measures were critical for disaster prevention in the long term.

Mr. Kull (World Bank) said that the 2014 World Development Report would discuss the questions of the convergence of humanitarian and development work, proactive and systematic risk management, and a shared response from all levels of society to risk management challenges. Governments played a key role in providing an enabling environment for shared action. The report would highlight the importance of: avoiding unnecessary risk; providing incentives for institutions to make their own contingency plans; establishing permanent mechanisms with a long-term risk management mandate; ensuring flexibility within a predictable institutional framework; protecting the vulnerable; and promoting community self-reliance.

Mr. Sørensen (Director-General, European Community Humanitarian Office) said that the World Humanitarian Summit would be an appropriate forum for discussing coordination of humanitarian and development work. In many developing countries problems with agriculture posed serious challenges. Varied and sustainable forms of agriculture should be developed in the Sahel region and reforestation should be encouraged.

Mr. Idrees (Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, National Disaster Management Authority, Pakistan) said that coordination with United Nations relief agencies was conducted mainly at the federal level in Pakistan. Recommendations to the Government were made at monthly meetings attended by all stakeholders. In times of disaster, the Government co-chaired the appropriate response cluster. Sustainable development must be closely linked to the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Mr. Pratomo (Founder of Jalin Merapi Community Radio, Indonesia) said that community radio could be used for many purposes, including for making requests to donors for funding.

Mr. Bostrom (Director of the Future of Humanity Institute and the Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology, University of Oxford) said that it was difficult to place an absolute value on human lives. In terms of cost-effectiveness of resource allocation, it was more appropriate to consider "quality-adjusted life years". National health services and some charities conducted analyses to decide on questions such as whether it was preferable to save the lives of the young or the elderly and how to ensure the quality of life of those who were saved.

Ms. Amos (Moderator) said that the issues regarding the coordination of humanitarian and development work should be clarified before the World Humanitarian Summit took place. The poll announced at the opening of the meeting had asked which of four benefits of risk-management and vulnerability-reduction approaches participants considered to be the most important. The four options provided, and their results, were that such approaches helped to:

(a) Identify and tackle the root causes and vulnerabilities leading to humanitarian crises – 45.5 per cent;

(b) Rally critical stakeholders around a common agenda and framework for action – 7.3 per cent;

(c) Anticipate, prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises in a cost-effective manner – 14.5 per cent;

(d) Reduce the human and economic costs of disasters – 32.7 per cent.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.